

critical digest

139 East 47 St. NY 17 NY
EL 5-6894 T. M. Kraus



Aug 15, 1956 Vol VIII No 23 The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter \$25 year \$6.50 quarter

This Week

No Exit-Theatre
East-211 E 60 8/14.
Newhall & Weigert
producers, Pat New-
hall director. With
Robert Mandan, Tani
Seitz, Helen Seamon.

The Affairs of
Anatole-Directors
Theatre 225 W 46.
Malin & Schectman
present Schnitzler's
play in 7 episodes,
each staged by a diff-
erent director. 8/15

The Picture of
Dorian Gray- Ble-
ecker St Theatre-
145 Bleecker-8/16.
Kohlman-Milligan-
Armetta producers.
With Paul Savior,
John O Leary.

Re-Openings

Middle of Night-
ANTA 8/27. With
Edward G. Robinson.

Inherit the Wind-
National 9/14. With
Paul Muni.

Digests of Current Comments on Summer Shows

Sound on the Goose- new drama by Nicholas Biel, tried at
White Barn, Westport, Conn-provided a better-than adequate
showcase for some good acting, writing and staging, approved
Bone, Variety. If show could survive commercial presentat-
ion though, critic said it was anybody's guess. . . First Night-
new comedy by A. P. Mollison tried at Sea Cliff, NY, missed
as the good earthy farce it might have been and emerged in-
stead as a romantic comedy that never got off the ground, pan-
ned Hank, Variety. . . The Painted Days-a new play by John
Byrne tried at Augusta, Mich. with a little more tightening
and pointing should stand a good chance for bigger showcase,
rates Bell, Variety.

Beasop's Fables- the new Beatrice Lillie revue package
making the summer route was rated as okay for Lillie fans
by Dash, Women's Wear, on Westport, Conn, viewing. But
critic warned that ticket buyers expecting a full-fledged mus-
ical will be somewhat disappointed. It is merely a blending of
a one-woman show with a one-man show (Fred Keating's magic
show.)

Taming of the Shrew at Stratford, Conn. was rated as a
superior vaudeville show by Watt, News. "M. T", Women's
Wear, also okayed it as a rollicking, romping fresh version
filled with modern pep.

Hits Revisited

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof with Marjorie Steele in the role
originated by Barbara Bel Geddes shows the newcomer as
already more than adequate in a very difficult assignment,
praises Hobe, Variety. Steele will no doubt improve with
continued playing. As before, Cat is a stunning show, he
repeats.

Children's Theatre

Bil and Cora Baird will present their puppet show for
children at Playhouse starting Sept 1. 21 performances will
be given in daytime during an 8 day period.

Fallen Angels closed... Fanny to give special matinee performances Sept 2 & 3 Labor Day week-end... Happiest Millionaire with Walter Pigeon opens Oct 29 at Barrymore... Look at Her is new title of musical version of Anne Christie... Matchmakers will move to Booth Nov 12, and then on Dec 5 move to Chicago... Gant Gaither will present Our Royal Past musical.

Players

Newcomer Peter Palmer signed for title role in Li'l Abner... Pat Hingle moves from Cat Hot Tin Roof to Girls in Summer cast, John Anderson replacing him in former... Bert Lahr signed for musical version Grand Hotel... Paul Langton, Robert Alda signed for Harbor Lights... Gene Wesson and Gordon Polk joined Happy Hunting... Edmund Purdon to star in Child of Fortune... Sally Gracie and Mark Herron added to Major Barbara... Signe Hasso to star in Apple Cart... Guthrie McClintic will stage Happiest Millionaire... Ina Claire may star in Sleeping Prince... John Latouche died at age 39 of heart attack. His Ballad of Baby Doe will be presented this season by Michael Myerberg.

Summer Playhouses

Ethel Waters to appear in 2 week tryout of Voice of Strangers at Spring Lake, NJ, starting Aug 20... Show Boat planning to extend season to Sept 8 at Jones Beach.

Vaudeville

Joe E Howard starred at Palace show with Don Cummings, Milt Douglas, Lilyan Cavell, Ted Lester and Dick Berk... Frank Sinatra and Dorsey Bros play one week at Paramount.

Legal Dept

Sept 26 hearing called by American Arbitration Association to settle dispute between Hal March and producers of the Brass Section. Latter are suing TV star for breach of contract, March was to star in play... Inquiry into ticket activities of Sylvia Siegler by NYC Dept of Licenses adjourned until Sept 13... Federal taxes of 10% on theatre tickets costing less than 90 cents were cut in new bill.

Other Broadways

Theatre in der Josefstadt, Vienna, will present Rendezvous in Vienna at Barbizon Plaza Theatre Sept 4... Anthony Quayle resigned as co-director of Stratford, England, Theatre. Glen Byam Shaw now sole director... Erlanger Theatre, Buffalo, NY, to be leased to private interests... Christopher Plummer, Stratford, Ontario, missed one performance of Henry V due to ill health.

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Antigone with Marisa Pavan and Claude Rains will be presented in a modern dress version Sept 11 on ABC Kaiser... Wayward Saint with Liam Redmond will be presented Aug 30 on NBC Lux... Charley's Aunt will be presented during season on CBS Playhouse 90... CBS TV will present Oedipus Rex on Omnibus this season... Louis Armstrong, Dorothy Dantridge, Sally Forrest join Cole Porter Festival on CBS Ford Oct 6.

Theatre Film Notes

Damn Yankees bought by Warners... Time Limit bought by Richard Widmark for \$100,000 plus



OFF BROADWAY

The Sea Gull, the last in Chekhov cycle presented by David Ross, will open at 4th St Theatre Oct 9. Dolores Del Rio will not appear in revival as scheduled due to a Mexican film commitment. Following Chekhov cycle Ross plans to present a Strindberg cycle of plays.

Nobody's Children by Richard Davidson will be presented at Open Stages, 15 Second Ave, Aug 22... Are We to blame, a new play by Joseph Ornato will be presented Sept 15 at Studio Theatre, 2121 Broadway... Sandra Church replaced Peggy McCay in Uncle Vanya... Absalom by Lionel Abel presented last season at 122-Second Ave will be revived at Carl Fisher Hall, 165 W 57, Sept 22 by Frank Nash and Marvin Goldstein... The Golden Fleece by Reuben Nadler will be presented at Contemporary Theatre, 15 Second Ave, starting Aug 23.

Taming of the Shrew presented at Shakespeare Theatre Workshop-East River Amphitheatre was praised by Gelb, Times, as a resourceful production with a particularly spirited and lovely performance by Colleen Dewhurst as Kate. Critic thought direction by Stuart Vaughn a trifle elementary, but suitable. Performance caught was halted at mid-way point due to rainstorm. Gelb hopes group raises \$750 needed for next outdoor production, Twelfth Night. It seems a shame that a project evidently bringing so much joy to so many should be permitted to die a-borning, he concluded.

THEATRE

BOOK

COMMENTS



"Sights and Spectacles 1937-56" by Mary McCarthy(Farrar, Straus) makes interesting reading, rates Beckett, Herald Tribune, but critic fears that short story writer is wasting her talents on NY theatre season. Her collection of reviews from Partisan Review should prove this fact to her editors, and she should be given carte blanche in her magazine columns.

The Vicarious Years" by John van Druten(Scribner) is an apt title for biography, okays Pippett, Times. Playwright never strikes a false note in this subtle recollection of how a talented young man found himself.

THEATRE

RECORD

COMMENTS

The Littlest Revue(Epic) album contains much clever stuff and does not suffer from cuteness, recommends Variety.

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CRITICAL DIGEST, 139 E 47, EL 5-6894



GREEN
ROOM
DEPARTMENT

NATIONAL DIFFERENCES... The British people go to the theatre to see plays, while Americans try to fight their way into hits, sums up Watts, Post, after an English theatre trip. Because English theatre prices are within reason, a large portion of the English people have developed the habit of regular playgoing, while in America the theatre has become an extreme luxury for the comparatively few, all of them struggling for seats to My Fair Lady.

COLUMN TIPS... Hotel Excelsior at Provincetown is a sex-farce 80% based on truth, the author told Winchell... My Fair Lady to sue to restrain Gordon MacCrae from singing 22 minute version of show in Las Vegas club date, reports Lyons... Most Happy Fella producers have stern talk planned with Robert Weede for missing so many shows, hears Kilgallen.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... League of NY Theatres 70 cent student ticket plan cheered by Coleman, Mirror as the right step in the building of \$6.60 patrons of tomorrow. Critic would also like to see mass student interviews with theatre stars... Stratford, Conn, production of King John may be last one in a life-time, warns Watts, Post... Perfect team of Shakespeare and Cole Porter missed by several centuries, notes Watt, News, who regrets that Cole Porter didn't write tunes for all of Taming of Shrew rather than just portions of it in Kiss Me Kate.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Why don't other producers use Negroes when circumstances warrant, asks a Variety reader. If the performers involved are talented, it's bound to add diversity and balance to the show... How many productions of Tea and Sympathy do summer managers think patrons will go, notes a "C.D." subscriber who finds that 3 versions of play is being presented on Long Island this week.

MEXICO & GERMANY... 17 theatres are thriving in Mexico City, Manolo Fabregas told Herridge, Post. Workers and people of the pueblos show an avid interest in theatre in Mexico... Western Germany had 300 theatres in operation, 114 of them permanent subsidized companies employees number 17,000 with 4200 performers. Survey from German Tourist Information Office reports a state subsidy of \$25 million yearly.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Robert Whitehead will present five plays this season--Separate Tables, Major Barbara, Sleeping Prince, Hole in The Head and Waltz of the Toreadors. In addition Levinson, World-Telegram-Sun learned, he would like to make an independent movie. Producer who considers himself highly undisciplined will probably be able to make a very good film, amusement editor predicted.



" PROS & CONS BY TMK "

Theatre, like everything else in America, takes a rear-seat during the next 2 weeks. The national conventions are in the spotlight. But the show business techniques borrowed by the party managers should not be ignored by theatre managers and theatre fans.

First and foremost is the party managers idea that everybody, but everybody, should be vitally interested in politics, conventions, and candidates. This is in direct opposition to the theatre viewpoint that only a minute portion of the public is interested in theatre, and an even smaller fraction in any one show in particular.

Second is the saturation technique used. If anybody lives through the next two weeks without knowing the fullest details of each candidate's personal life and the reasons he did or did not make a certain move it is only because he is deaf, dumb and blind.

Third is the vital fact that politics is shown during convention time at least to be interesting fun. For diverse reasons many a talented, young person decides at convention time that politics should be his career.

Granted there are no potential sponsors available to promote theatre to such a degree, but any step forward would be an improvement. At the moment there is not one single radio or TV program devoted to theatre. Except for the ANTA 40 city plan there is no group promoting theatre on a nation-wide scope. Theatre people should watch the conventions and learn.

* * * *

Shakespeare Theatre Workshop production of *Taming of the Shrew* is a lively, well done and colorful version of the Bard's comedy. The performances presented Thursday and Fridays at the 2000 seat outdoor East River Amphitheatre as a free public service in cooperation with the NYC Dept of Parks deserves the support of theatre fans and the outright subsidy of private and/or public grants.

Top credit must go to direct Stuart Vaughan who kept his cast of 50 moving at full run on the huge stage. Colorful costumes, inspired lighting, and an amphi theatre filled with 2000 interested folk highlighted the production. Jack Cannon and Collen Dewhurst in the leading roles were fine, though some members of the cast overplayed and overshadowed.

The vocal disappointment of the audience when informed the evening covered that the play would not be finished due to a sudden, heavy rainstorm is proof of their interest and intent. Many of the audience would have gladly sat through the rain to see the end of the performance.

Shakespeare Theatre Workshop indoor productions this winter in an East 6th St church were hardly inspired. Group headed by Joseph Papp has improved and seems blessed with the rare, unusual talents of staging successful outdoor dramas.

Even if their outdoor productions were not of such high quality as they are, the group deserves support for bringing theatre to a new audience. 80% of the viewers come from the area, Papp estimates. Full houses show there is nothing wrong with theatre that low prices (and or free seats) would not cure.

* * * *

Dramatic Critics:

A Brotherhood

Coming as they do from every walk of life, differing widely as they do in temperament, taste, education and sensibility, drama critics resemble a religious order in which a heterogeneous collection of men are bound together by one love held in common, British critic W. A. Darlington told "Theatre Digest".

In every drama critic whose name counted for anything, the same indomitable passion is found, though hidden sometimes under a pretence of flippancy or even an appearance of disgust.

Without this passion, Darlington states, nobody can remain a drama critic for long, and the passion is found in very few. He has seen dozens of young men given their chance, and then seen them wilt under the impact of a succession of bad plays, and then depart with relief to find their true vocation. The genuine theatre-lover finds it difficult, even impossible, to depart at all.

London critic can think of no British exception to the truth of the above generalization, either among the men who were at the head of the profession when he first joined it, or among those who later took their places.

SUMMER THEATRE TRYOUTS



Dead on Nine- mystery play by Jack Popplewell with Barbara Britton, Murray Matheson presented by Ron Rawson and Charles Mooney. Aug 13 at East Hampton, NY

Golden Egg- a new comedy by Phillip King and Gioia Cook with Donald Cook presented by Alexander Ince and Joel Schenker. At Coonamessett, Mass, Aug 13.

Question of Marriage-a new play by Stephen Hill with Farley Granger presented by Edward Choate and Mike Ellis at New Hope, Pa. Aug 13.

The Spa- adapted by Edward Chodorov from Molnar's Olympia with Gloria Vanderbilt, Violet Heming, Turhan Bey presented by Barr, Bowden, Bullock at Hyde Park, NY Aug 6, Cape Playhouse, Mass Aug 13

Sudden Spring -Elihu Winer's adaption of a play by Halstead Welles with Celeste Holm presented at Fayetteville, NY Aug 13.



" THEATRE CALENDER "

Hotel Excelsior-Provincetown 8/7
No Excl. Theatre East-8/14
Picture Gorian Gray-Bleeker 8/16
Nobody's Child-O. on Stage 8/22

Saint Joan-Phoenix 9/4
Arms & Man-Downtown 9/7
Pictures at Exhibition-Playhouse 9/16
Lower Daphne-Contemporary 9/16
Judy Garland Show -Palace 9/20
Take Giant Step-Jan Hus 9/25
Absalom-Carl Fleher Hall 9/27

Loud Red Patrick-Ambassador 10/3
6 Fingers 5 Finger Cl-Longacre 10/3
Harbor Lights-Playhouse 10/4
Mr. Candido-G. News 10/8
Sea Gull-4th St-10/8 9
Featured Fauna-Golden 10/10
Reluctant Debutante-Miller 10/10
Daisy Miller-Equity Lib-10/10
Too Late Phalarope-Belasco 10/11

Happy Art Hill-Fleher Hall - 10/7
Apple Cart- Plymouth 10/18
Lil Abner- St James -10/22
Old Vic-W. Garden- 10/23
Separate Tables-Music Box 10/25
Happiest Millionaire-Barrym 10/20
Major Barbara-Beck 10/30
Auntie Mame-Broadhurst 10/31

" SUMMER PACKAGE RATINGS "

BEASOP'S FABLES(Lille)

1 Pro- Post(Andover)
1 Con- Variety (Andover

CHALK GARDEN (Glans)

2 Pro-Variety & Wor -Tel_-Sun(Wesport)

Shake & Stone(Gingold)

1 Pro- Post- East Hampton
2 Con- WT & S & Variety (East Hampton

WELCOME DARLINGS (Baucksted)

3 Pro for Baucksted but against material
Post, WT &S. Variety (Wesport)

WHAT'S THE RUSH (Lewis)

1 Pro- Variety - Hinsdale, III)

" O F F B R O A D W A Y "

AQUASHOW
Flushing CI 5-6641
6 pro votes for Murphy 12th edition watershow

ICEMAN COMETH 5 Sher Sq
Circle \$3.60 OR 5-9437
6 Pros- Times, Trib, Mirror, J. Am, WT & S, Post

MAN DESTINY 85 E 4
Downtown \$3.60 CR 3-4412
2 Pro- Times, Post
2 Con- Variety, Womens Wear

3 PENNY OPER 121 Chris
De Lys \$3.60 WA 4-8782
3 Pros- Times, Trib, Post

SHOW BOAT Jones Beach
7 Pro for Guy Lombardo production

TAM NG SHREW East River Amp
Thur & Fri to Sept

UNCLE VANYA 83 E 4
4th St OR 4-5710
7 Pro for revival, A. Ryder replaced F. Tone

WORLD MY OYS. 100 7th S.
Actors \$3.60 OR 5-1036
4 Cons-Times, Trib, Post, Women Wear

" C. D. VIEWS OF CURRENT SHOWS "

Pros: Darn Yankee, Diary Anne Frank, Fallen Angels, Inherit Wind
Uncle Vanya, Iceman Cometh

Cons: Middle Night, Fanny

" T V THEATRE SHOWS "

8/30- NBC- Wayward Saint- Liam Redmond on Lux Theatre
9/11- ANC- Antigone with Claude Rains, Marias Pagan on Kaiser Hour
10/6- CBS- Cole Porter Festival with Shipley Jones, Gordon McCree Forrd Festival
10/28- Born Yesterday- NBC- with Mary Martin on Evans Show
11/25- NBC- Man and Superman with Maurice Evans on Evans Show.

 Aug 15, 1956 PLAYGOERS GUIDE chart of CRITICAL DIGEST, 139 E 47, NYC EL 5-6894

This weekly chart of CRITICAL DIGEST, the weekly NYC theatre newsletter, presents up-to-minute data on current business and critical reception of all current Broadway and Off-Broadway shows. Subscribers to CRITICAL DIGEST may write or phone for any other specific data or late reviews.

"C". Critics-figures refer to percentage of PRO votes filed by NYC daily drama critics. PRO means show was recommended for an entertaining and/or stimulating evening, not if critic thought it would be a hit.

"B". Business-figures refer to percentage of seats sold last week and in preceding weeks. %Perc figures refer to last week's business. "CAP" figures refer to Variety's estimates of gross for last week and previous week. All figures listed in thousands. Thus, "Cap \$27--\$24 \$21" means Capacity of house is \$27, business last week was \$24,000, the previous week \$21,000, etc.

| | | |
|------------------|-----------|---|
| CAT HOT TIN ROOF | 217 W 45 | 60% C- Chapman, News, filed sole con vote |
| Morisco \$6.90 | CI 6-6230 | 55% B- Cap \$31--\$19 \$19 \$21 \$21 \$20 \$28 \$27 |
| DAMN YANKEE | 226 W 46 | 100% C- Unanimous raves for musical |
| 46th St \$8.05 | CI 6-4271 | 90% B- Cap \$50--\$42 \$43 \$8 \$48 \$47 \$50 \$46 \$50 |
| DIARY A. FRANK | 138 W 48 | 100% C- Unanimous raves for Pulitzer winner |
| Cort \$5.75 | CI 5-4289 | 90% B- Cap \$28 --\$21 \$22 \$28 \$24 \$28 \$27 \$25 \$28 |
| FANNY | 245 W 44 | 50% C- Con votes by Tzlib, Mir, Post, J. Am |
| Majestic 7, 50 | CI 6-0730 | 45% B- Cap \$62--\$28 \$28 \$28 \$24 \$19 \$25 \$28 |
| HATFUL RAIN | 149 W 45 | 70% C- 3 Con votes by Mirror, Post, Journal American |
| Lyceum \$5.75 | LU 2-3897 | 35% B- Cap \$23 \$8 \$8 \$10 \$14 \$14 \$18 |
| INHERIT WIND | 208 W 41 | 90% C- Funke, sole con vote, Times. |
| National \$5.75 | PE 6-8226 | RE OPENS SEPT L4***** |
| MATCHMAKER | 250 W 45 | 90% C- Watts, Post, sole con vote |
| Royale \$5.75 | CI 5-5760 | 40% B- Cap \$31--\$12 \$14 \$13 \$14 \$17 \$21 |
| MIDDLE NIGHT | 250 W 52 | 20% C- 2 pro play-Mir, J. Am- 100% for Robinson |
| ANTA \$5.75 | CI 6-8870 | RE OPENS AUG 24 ***** |
| MR WONDERFUL | 1681 Bway | 10% C- Chapman, News, sole pro--100% C for Davis |
| Broadway \$7.50 | CI 7-2887 | 65% B- Cap \$71--\$41 \$42 \$45 \$46 \$41 \$48 \$54 \$58 |
| MOST HAPPY FELLA | 246 W 45 | 100% Unanimous raves for musical & cast |
| Imperial \$7.50 | CO 5-2412 | 100% B- Cap \$48--\$58 \$56 \$58 \$58 \$58 \$58 |

MY FAIR LADY
 Hellinger \$7.50
 NO TIME SOTS
 Alvin \$5.75
 NEW FACES
 Barrymore \$7.50
 PAJAMA GAME
 St James \$6.90
 WILL SUGGEST
 Shubert \$5.75

1655 Bway
 PL 7-7064
 290 W 52
 CI 5-5226
 247 W 47
 CI 6-0390
 240 W 44
 LA 4-4664
 245 SW 44
 CI 6-5090

100% C- Raves for musical of CBS classic
 100% B- Cap \$64--\$64 \$64 \$64 \$64 \$64 \$64
 100% C- Unanimous raves for soldier comedy
 100% B- Cap \$38--\$38 \$38 \$38 \$38 \$38 \$38
 60% C- 3 Pros- News, Mirror, J. Am.
 60% B- Cap \$38--\$22 \$23 \$27 \$30 \$36 \$22 \$37
 100% Unanimous raves for musical
 50% B- Cap \$52--\$27 \$27 \$30 \$29 \$28 \$32 \$38 \$41
 20% C- 2 Pros- J. Am- News.
 30% B- Cap \$41--\$12 \$14 \$15- moved from Belasco

"RATINGS OF NYC CRITICS"

1955-56 season ratings of NYC drama critics on CURRENT Broadway shows by Critical Digest. %Figures are percentage of pro votes in comparison to number of current shows reviewed. Variety figures of 1955-56 and 1954-55 seasons are percentage figures of favorable reviews written for entire season.

| | "C. D. %" | Pros | Cons | Variety 1955-'56 | '54-'55 |
|----------------------|-----------|------|------|------------------|---------|
| Albion, Times | 60% | 10 | 6 | .490 | .607 |
| Kerr, Herald Tribune | 55% | 9 | 7 | .354 | .354 |
| Chapman, News | 80% | 13 | 3 | .527 | .580 |
| Coleman, Mirror | 65% | 11 | 5 | .454 | .566 |
| Watts, Post | 50% | 8 | 8 | .541 | .426 |
| Hawkins, W-Tel-Sun | 65% | 11 | 5 | .396 | .548 |
| McClain, J. Amer | 80% | 12 | 4 | .535 | .532 |

